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A BUREAU
OF
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

IN CONNECTION WITH
THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTION

BY
ANDREW C. McLAUGHLIN



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A BUREAU OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The editor of *THE JOURNAL* has asked me to write a few words concerning the work and purposes of the Bureau of Historical Research which has been established at Washington in connection with the Carnegie Institution. In meeting this request it may be well to say first a word about the Institution itself. The reader will doubtless remember that it was established two years ago—January, 1902—by Mr. Carnegie, who gave a liberal sum for its maintenance. The administration of the fund and the execution of the purposes of the trust were confided to a board of twenty-six trustees, of whom the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House were to be members. The purpose of this grant was not to establish a college or university in any ordinary sense, but to promote original research, “to discover the exceptional man in every department of study, whenever and wherever found, inside or outside of schools, and enable him to make the work for which he seems specially designed his life work,” and in other ways to promote investigation and scholarship.

The trustees appointed advisory committees of experts, asking from them recommendations as to the steps to be taken for the best promotion of work in their respective fields. The advisory committee on history reported among other things the advisability of establishing an institute of historical research at Washington, not dissimilar to the French, Prussian, and Austrian institutes at Rome. The purpose of this institute would be to prepare first a report on the government archives, to edit for publication certain selected portions of the archives, to serve as a clearing house for the historical scholars in America and to facilitate their researches in Washington, and, lastly, to provide suitable guidance and instruction for such advanced and highly competent graduate students as should re-

sort to it for that purpose. Partly to carry out these and other recommendations there has been established at Washington a Bureau of Historical Research. It is now difficult to say exactly what this may develop into or what its growth will be. As to this no one can say, because in some ways the Institution is as yet not fully determined in all respects as to its policy and line of growth; it is now doing a great work in aiding research, but in some particulars its methods and plans are being allowed to develop as needs disclose themselves. The bureau has already proved of some service to historical investigators who have come to Washington for study. While the director of the bureau cannot know the archives thoroughly—as indeed no one can—he can generally give some suggestion as to method of work. The director is also managing editor of the *American Historical Review*, and gives a portion of his time to his editorial duties. The personal connection between the *Review* and the Institution is helpful to the work of each.

In the future it is likely that advanced students and investigators will come more and more frequently to Washington, and the bureau should form a center where historical scholars can gather and from which they can get at least the aid that comes from association with other investigators. It seems as if every student of American history, every investigator who expects to teach should spend a portion of his time in Washington that he may know the government and have some knowledge of the collections of historical material. The bureau should be of service to those that come.

At present the activities are chiefly these:—It has in preparation a comprehensive guide to the archives of the government, which will be printed in the course of the next few months. This guide will not pretend to give detailed information of the millions of individual documents, but will describe collections, the work of departments, and divisions of the government, and the nature and accessibility of their archives. Under the direction of the bureau a somewhat similar guide to American historical material in England is being prepared. To it will be added a list of papers in the British archives

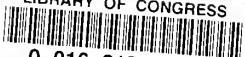
that refer to American history and that are now to be found in print and also a list of such material now present in American libraries in the form of transcripts. This volume, it is hoped, will appear before the end of this year. There is likewise in preparation a bibliography of books and articles on American history for the year 1903. This list when completed and annotated will form a substantial volume; and it is hoped that the work can be carried on in the future, thus giving to historical investigators an exhaustive bibliography of each succeeding year.

In conclusion it may be said that the bureau is established with the purpose of being of use to scholars. Anything that can be done to bring the investigator and his material together is within the purview of its hopes even if beyond the possibility of present achievement.

A. C. McLAUGHLIN

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